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**WASHINGTON, DC**— Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) today stood up for tax paying Americans when he offered two amendments to the 2009 Department of Defense Authorization bill, which passed the House by a vote of 383 to 26. Both amendments passed by voice vote. The first amendment ends a recent Pentagon propaganda program. The second amendment ensures that truckers, – who are suffering from record high diesel fuel prices –engaged in defense contracts, receive any fuel surcharge placed on shipped goods.

The first amendment was in response to a New York Times story, which appeared in April of this year, that exposed a Pentagon program designed to convince the American public that the war in Iraq and the war on terror were going well. The program provided retired military leaders, who were frequently featured in the media, with talking points, special tours, access to high level meetings, and even classified materials to ensure they spun the war to the Pentagon's liking. Many of these retired military leaders have financial relationships with defense contractors, creating a clear conflict of interest. DeFazio previously authored a letter, signed by 22 Members of Congress, to the Committee on Appropriations asking the committee to specifically defund this program. In reaction to these media accounts, the Department of Defense (DoD) has suspended this program pending an internal review.

The amendment calls for both the DoD Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office to conduct studies of the extent to which the DoD has violated the law with their propaganda program. It also reminds the Pentagon war hawks that there has been a long standing federal prohibition on spending taxpayer money on propaganda programs.

"I believe the use of deception by the Pentagon to influence the American public's perception of the Iraq War is unhealthy to our democracy," DeFazio said. "The American public and Congress deserve the truth. The debate about the success or failure of Iraq should be made on the facts, not deceptive pundits with conflicts of interest."

The second DeFazio amendment was offered to ensure fuel surcharges are passed onto independent truckers. Due to the sharp rise in the cost of transporting goods by truck, brokers are assessing fuel charges on shippers in order to cover the increased cost of hauling their goods. However, those surcharges are often not being passed onto independent truckers who are purchasing the fuel. While every American driver is impacted by these dramatic gas increases, the rise in diesel fuel costs has had a particularly significant impact on the trucking industry.

Under the amendment, shippers under contract to the DoD would be required to pass through the fuel surcharge to the person who actually pays for the fuel on all trucking contracts. The broker must also disclose any fuel surcharge publicly, including posting it online, and the Secretary of Defense is directed to prescribe regulations to ensure enforcement.

"This legislation will help truckers, who are hard hit by sky-rocketing fuel prices, get what is rightfully theirs," DeFazio said. "This will ease some of the pressure they are feeling at the pump and help keep them in business."

DeFazio is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, which has jurisdiction over the motor carrier industry.